

Archaeology at the Armstrong Farmstead



SITE

Armstrong Farmstead (15Fa185)

COUNTY

Fayette

PROJECT

US 27/68 Upgrade
District 7

HIGHLIGHTS

Phase III Archaeology
African-American History
Rural 19th Century Lifeways
Student Interns

INTRODUCTION

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) is charged with the responsibility of protecting important archaeological and historical sites that may be affected by highway construction. The ongoing archaeological research at the 19th century Armstrong Farmstead is an excellent example of the KYTC's efforts to document and preserve Kentucky's past. This archaeological mitigation project offers a great opportunity to educate the public about the lifeways of early 19th century Kentuckians and complements Governor Patton's "Education Pays" program.

Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. (CRA) conducted archaeological investigations at the site under contract with KYTC and in partnership with Palmer Engineering, Inc. The project includes the excavation of three structures: a house, a springhouse, and a possible carriage house. Additional features included a possible privy, a trash pit, and a midden.



THE ARMSTRONG FARMSTEAD

John and Mary Armstrong purchased the property on which the farmstead is located in 1846. We know that John Armstrong was an Irish immigrant and a farmer. Mary, who was 15 years younger than John, was born in Vermont and a seamstress. It appears that they met, married, and raised a family on the East Coast before they moved to Kentucky. After John's death in 1875, the property was deeded to his daughter, Ann Armstrong. Heirs bought and sold the property during the remainder of the 19th century. Several different people owned the property throughout the first half of the 20th century. After 1959, Robin Scully owned the property, and it eventually became part of present day Clovelly Farm, a 700-acre horse farm.

Census data show that by 1850 five African-American slaves (one adult and four children) resided and worked on the Armstrong farmstead.

The residents of the Armstrong Farmstead witnessed dramatic changes in rural Kentucky life from the early 19th through the early 20th century, especially during the Civil War and Reconstruction Period.



CLIENT

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WHAT WE WILL LEARN

The Armstrong Site offers a unique opportunity to better understand Kentucky's 19th century agricultural history. In addition, the farmstead was in operation before and after the Civil War and may provide information about the conditions of slavery and the lifeways of African-Americans.

After fieldwork at the site is completed, personnel at Cultural Resource Analysts will spend the next several months analyzing the materials collected, which include items such as food remains, ceramics, and other artifacts that will provide clues about the largely undocumented lives of everyday rural Kentuckians. These materials will be used to answer a variety of research questions, such as: Was the Armstrong family engaged in subsistence farming or producing agricultural products for a wider market? How did John Armstrong's social position as a wealthy farmer influence the types of material goods used by his family? What do the objects recovered from the site tell us about the social relations of class, gender, and ethnicity of site occupants? What were the differences or similarities between the lives of the Euro-American and African-American residents? Answers to these and other questions will enrich our knowledge of Kentucky's 19th century history.



PUBLIC BENEFITS

KYTC and Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc. are strongly committed to public education and involvement. Several mechanisms were used to inform the public of activities at the site. A local television news crew filmed the archaeologists at work and interviewed the Project Archaeologist about the site. Public tours of the site also were arranged and information pamphlets were created. In addition, students from Transylvania University were provided internships during this project, which gave them an invaluable opportunity to learn about archaeology. Finally, a comprehensive report will be written that details all of the findings from this archaeological investigation. Public and professional presentations will be given about the significant results. The artifacts and attendant data, including the report, will be curated with the University of Kentucky Museum of Anthropology.

